Stages and Wisconsin Alternate Assessment

OVERVIEW

Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal assessment software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

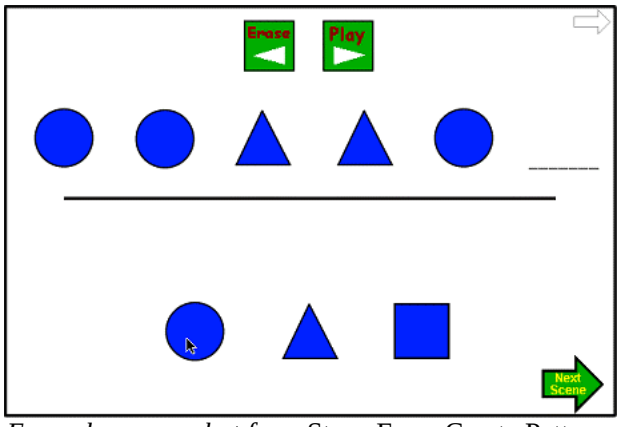
Stages software enhances the Wisconsin's alternate assessment process because:

1. **Stages aligns with the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards [WMAS] in Math and Language Arts though the alternate performance indicators [APIs].**
2. **Stages generates records of learner performance.**
3. **Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**
4. **Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

1. Stages aligns with the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards [WMAS] in Math and Language Arts through the alternate performance indicators [APIs].
Stages ensures meaningful and effective access to WMAS content areas for learners who require modifications in order to participate in statewide assessment. Stages activities provide a way for learners participating in alternate assessment to demonstrate achievement of many alternate performance standards. The learner's IEP team can also use Stages to help determine if alternate assessment is appropriate. Please refer to the section entitled "How Stages Correlates with WMAS through Alternate Performance Standards" for detailed matching to the alternate assessment items.

2. Stages generates records of learner performance.
During Stages software activities, the instructor can print directly from any screen to capture a learner-generated product as a benchmark. At the end of each activity, a report with instructional data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The instructor may wish to then print that screen or save the information as a text-format electronic file.

Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructional team make the most out of an activity session. The data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. Two adults from the instructional team can work together: one adult can encourage the learner and the other can note valuable data about behaviors without being noticed by the learner. Alternatively if a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid. Over time, the collected data will provide evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement.



Example screen shot from Stage Four: Create Patterns

3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.
The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills with minimal supervision. Many Stages activities include accessible choice-making opportunities. Functional skills activities include real-life community settings.

4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools..
An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's instructor, parents, and others in the IEP team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment. Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the variables.

SUMMARY

Stages augments the Wisconsin alternate assessment cycle for special education. The Stages software is a comprehensive benchmark tool to assist the instructional team in collecting valuable information on learner skill achievement, determine assessment strategy, and discover the learner's abilities and thinking approach.

How Stages Correlates with WMAS Alternate Performance Standards[1]

Math
Sample Alternate Performance Indicators [APIs]

A. Mathematical Processes

A.4.1. 1. Respond to sensory input.
2. Recognize a difference in patterns.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage One: Press and Hold, Press and Release
Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns

- In Stage One, information is recorded about the learner's response to sound and/or visual stimuli. The learner activates an input device to advance through the activity.
- The *Patterns* activities in Stage Four allow the learner to first view patterns of color, shape and sound as they are played. The learner then selects appropriate objects to complete patterns. Finally the learner creates patterns using objects on the screen.

A.4.2. 1. Respond to math ideas using vocabulary.
2. Use graphs, charts, and tables.
3. Use number concept.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Number ID, Counting, Estimating
Stage Five: *Math:* Charts and Graphs
Problem Solving: Number Guess

- Stage Four *Number ID* gives the learner an opportunity to match numbers with their names. The *Counting* activity asks the learner to choose from a number line to show the quantity of objects displayed on the screen. *Estimating* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of relative quantity vocabulary such as 'more/less'.
- Stage Five *Charts and Graphs* includes bar graphs, line graphs, pie charts and familiar objects such as animals and foods. *Number Guess* applies the learner's knowledge of relative number values to a deductive reasoning game.

A.4.3. 2. Use information given in symbols.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Three: *All Activities*

Activities in Stage Three include Mayer-Johnson Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) together with text and auditory prompting. The learner follows simple instructions to choose an object on the screen.

[1] Information from Wisconsin Sample Alternate Performance Indicators for Mathematical Processes and Language Arts. (Accessed June 17, 2002). Source: http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dlsea/een/assmt_api.html.

B. Number Operations and Relationships

B.4.1. 2. Demonstrate use of a number line.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Math Facts (+, -, x, ÷), Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷)

- *Math Facts* includes addition and subtraction questions with and without regrouping. *Word Problems* includes problems with and without on-screen manipulatives to aid the learner.

B.4.2. 2. Recognize coins (e.g., penny, nickel, dime, quarter).

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Six: Money Names

- *Money Names* includes coins and bills displayed at correct relative sizes.

B.4.4. 1. Identify that two halves make a whole.
2. Distinguish a part as a piece of a whole.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Fractions

- *Fractions* includes parts of whole objects and groups of objects.

B.4.7. 1. Use money in real life activities.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Six: *Assess:* Counting Money, Money Equivalents

- Money questions are combined with real-life scenarios in these activities. The learner identifies correct dollar amounts in combinations of bills and coins.

C. Geometry

C.4.1. 1. Recognize or identify shapes verbally or by pointing.
2. Sort shapes into groups.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Four: Shape ID
Stage Five: *Math:* Geometry
Problem Solving: Mystery Shape

- Stage Four *Shape ID* asks the learner to identify shapes in isolation and in scenes of real world objects (drawings and photographs).
- Stage Five *Geometry* asks the learner to determine perimeter, area, and volume of 2-D and 3-D figures. The *Mystery Shape* activity is a puzzle the learner solves by comparing properties of shapes.

C.4.2. 1. Understand spatial relations.
2. Differentiate spatial relations.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Spatial Relationships

- Stage Four *Spatial Relationships* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of positional vocabulary such as ‘above/below.’

D. Measurement

D.4.2. 1. Demonstrate understanding of basic measurement concepts.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Estimating

- Stage Four *Estimating* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of relative size vocabulary such as 'big/little.'

D.4.3. 1. Tell time.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Six: *Explore and Assess:* Telling Time

- The learner indicates time to the minute, quarter-hour, half-hour, and hour on digital and analog clocks.

E. Statistics and Probability

E.4.3. 1. Read and interpret a graph, table, or chart and use the information.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Charts and Graphs

- Familiar scenarios in this activity help introduce the learner to graphical data representation and interpretation. The learner reads and interprets graphs, tables, and charts and uses the information to answer questions.

F. Algebraic Relationships

F.4.1. 1. Use one-to-one correspondence.
2. Identify and use patterns.

Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Number ID, Counting
Stage Six: *Assess:* Counting Money, Money Equivalents

- In Stage Four, the learner matches the correct number to the number of objects on the screen.
- Nickels, dimes, pennies, and quarters give the learner an opportunity to count by 1's, 5's, and 10's in Stage Six.

F.4.2. 1. Correctly use symbols and vocabulary of addition and subtraction.
2. Use the vocabulary of equal or same as.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Counting
Stage Five: *Math:* Math Facts (+, -)

- Stage Four *Counting* provides a device-accessible number line and simple animations.
- The learner uses the accessible number line to input the solution to simple one- and two-digit addition and subtraction fact problems in Stage Five.

F.4.3. 1. Recognize and extend number patterns.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Four: *Math Readiness:* Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns

· Stage Four *Patterns* activities introduce the learner to patterns using shapes, color, and sound, have them continue patterns, and allow them to generate their own patterns.

F.4.5. 1. Distinguish between the concepts of more or less and all or none.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Six: *Assess:* Money Equivalents

· In this activity, learners select the correct set of bills and/or coins that is equivalent in value to a given set of bills and/or coins.

F.4.6. 1. Use arithmetic relationships.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Math:* Word Problems (x)

· Graphics in *Word Problems* help the learner visualize multiplication as repeat addition.

Language Arts
Sample Alternate Performance Indicators [APIs]

A. Reading /Literature

A.4.1. 1. Use a variety of strategies and word recognition skills.
4. Analyze word structures.
5. Demonstrate phonemic awareness.
6. Comprehend reading by using strategies such as activating prior knowledge, and developing visual images.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Reading:* Sounds, Meaning
Stage Six: *Stories:* Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan
Stage Seven: *Making Stories*

- The Stage Five *Sounds* activity is based on a series of rhyming sentence pairs. The learner is shown the sentences with simple animations. Then, the learner is asked to choose the rhyming words from a word wall. The *Meaning* activity asks the learner to choose items from a scene to show understanding of the meanings of words.
- Stage Six *Stories* include pictures for context clues to meanings of text.
- Stage Seven *Making Stories* allows the learner to write about personal experience or contribute to discussion via assistive technology.

A.4.4. 1. Read and demonstrate comprehension of safety words, symbols, and pictures.
2. Read and demonstrate comprehension of environmental print, symbols, and pictures.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Six: *Assess:* Recognizing Signs

- This Stage Six activity includes signs such as restroom, exit, and telephone, using realistic scenarios. The learner selects the appropriate sign to look for given a verbal (auditory) or text (visual) cue.

B. Writing

B.4.1. 1. Use a variety of writing styles, printed word and/or symbol pictures to communicate feelings, needs, desires, and thoughts.
2. Use a variety of writing technologies to communicate (e.g., pencil, pen, computer).
3. Write for a variety of readers.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Building Sentences
Making Stories

- Stage Seven *Building Sentences* provides the learner with word walls at three different levels of vocabulary. The learner can use this activity to write one or two sentences without requiring typing ability. *Making Stories* allows the learner to import a photograph as a writing prompt. An on-screen keyboard provides access to punctuation and capitalization. Both activities provide text-to-speech feedback.

B.4.3. 1. Use periods, question marks, and exclamation points.
2. Use plural and singular forms.
3. Use capital letters, including proper nouns, titles, and initial words of sentences.
4. Understand and functionally use different parts of speech.
5. Spell frequently used words.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Spelling and Grammar

- This is actually a collection of activities, including Spelling, Homonyms, Capitalization, Noun-Verb Agreement, Pronoun Use, Word Order, and a Custom Sentence/Word List option.

C. Oral Language

C.4.1. 1. Demonstrate effective expressive communication behaviors to make their message understood. These may include gestures, signs, verbal, assistive technology, pictures, symbols, and connected speech.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
All Stages

- Observations Forms at each Stage guide the instructor to record critical learner behaviors that demonstrate expressive communication.

C.4.2. 1. Increase vocabulary needed for daily living in the community and school environments.
4. Follow oral directions and instructions.
5. Enjoy speech rhythm and rhyme.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Two: *All Activities*
Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Building Sentences
All Stages: Prompting and directions

- Stage Two activities are short rhyming passages about common subjects such as toys, vehicles, and animals. The learner simply uses an access device to advance through the passage. Simple animations keep the passages engaging for the learner.
- Word walls at three levels of difficulty provide the learner with a means of creating sentences without requiring typing ability.
- Activities in all Stages include verbal prompts and directions for the learner to follow in order to complete a task. Text (visual) cues may be turned on or off in preferences for some activities.

D. Language

D.4.1. 2. Identify meanings of a variety of words in the language or mode used by the students.
3. Develop strategies for associating meaning of new words.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:
Stage Five: *Reading:* Meaning
Problem Solving: Tic-Tac-Toe
Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Building Sentences

- In Stage Five *Meaning,* the learner matches pictures to printed words. In *Tic-Tac-Toe,* the learner demonstrates turn taking skills in an accessible version of the classic game.
- Stage Seven *Building Sentences* can give the learner an opportunity to demonstrate ability to use a word wall to write sentences without requiring a keyboard.